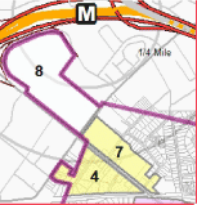


West End
Planning Opportunity Area 4, 7, & 8

West End



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



City of Falls Church Department of Development Services
300 Park Avenue, Suite 300 West
Falls Church, VA 22046

703-248-5040 (TTY 711)
703-248 5225 fax
plan@fallschurchva.gov



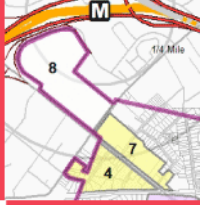
The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This document will be made available in alternate format upon request. Call 703 248-5080 (TTY 711).

Policy of Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Disability:

The City of Falls Church does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its employment practices or in the admission to, access to, or operations of its services, programs, or activities. Cindy Mester, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia 22046 has been designated to coordinate compliance with the ADA non-discrimination requirement.



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Acknowledgements

City Council

David Tarter, Mayor
Marybeth Connelly, Vice Mayor
Phil Duncan
Letty Hardi
David F. Snyder
Dan Sze
Ross Litkenhous

Planning Commission

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Andrew Rankin Vice Chair
Melissa Teates
Brent Krasner
Tim Stevens
Rob Puentes
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Economic Development Authority

Robert Young, Chairman
Erik Pelton, Vice Chairman
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Cindy Mester, Deputy City Manager

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Department of Recreation & Parks

Danny Schlitt, Director

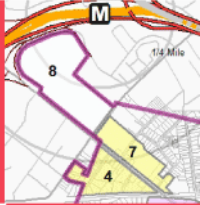
Special Thanks

City Boards & Commissions
Public Meeting Participants



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Contents

1 Introduction & Background

- 1-1 Purpose
- 1-2 Local Context and Geography
- 1-4 Regional Context
- 1-6 Methodology
- 1-7 History
- 1-12 Existing Comprehensive Plan Guidance

2 Concepts

- 2-1 Vision & Goals
- 2-2 The West End
- 2-4 Quality Urban Design that Builds Upon a Sense of Place
- 2-6 Multimodal Connectivity & Accessibility
- 2-8 Communities Building Blocks
- 2-10 Public Gathering Spaces that Create Opportunities for Community Activities

3 Land Use & Zoning*

4 Mobility & Accessibility*

5 Character & Urban Design*

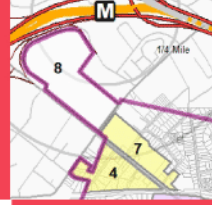
6 Community Building Blocks*

7 Implementation*

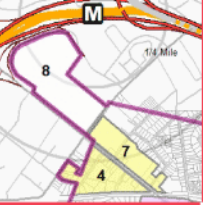
Appendix A: Public Engagement*

- A-1 List of Public Meetings
- A-2 Comments Received from Boards & Commissions
- A-12 Public Comments

* Chapters to be drafted



1. Introduction & Background



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Purpose

The City's Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for future development of the City. The Plan describes demographic trends, describes existing conditions, and sets policies for future conditions in the City, including land use, transportation, urban design, and environment.

Within the context of setting policies for development of the City, the Comprehensive Plan identifies several Planning Opportunity Areas (POAs) (See the Opportunity Area Priority/Schedule map on page 1-4). The Comprehensive Plan describes POAs as being areas where property is currently underutilized. Redevelopment could help improve quality of life in these areas of the City and further the realization of the Plan's overall vision for the City.

This Small Area Plan will provide a general concept for the City's West End which covers three POAs: the Gordon Road Triangle (POA 4), West End (POA 7), and School-Related Parcels (POA 8). This plan is intended to provide an area-specific framework for redevelopment that supports and builds upon the guidelines established in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Authority of the Plan

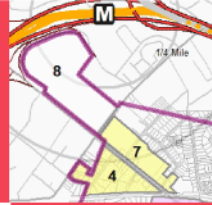
This plan and the concepts herein create a conceptual framework for redevelopment and public improvements for the City's West End that, when combined, will create a vibrant, economically viable, walkable, bicycle friendly, destination along one of the City's major commercial corridors adjacent to the West Falls Church Metro Station and Interstate 66. The recommendations in this Plan are meant to provide a starting point for public and private investment into general improvements to the area. This Plan does not constitute a change to the City's

Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map, Zoning Ordinance, or Zoning Map.

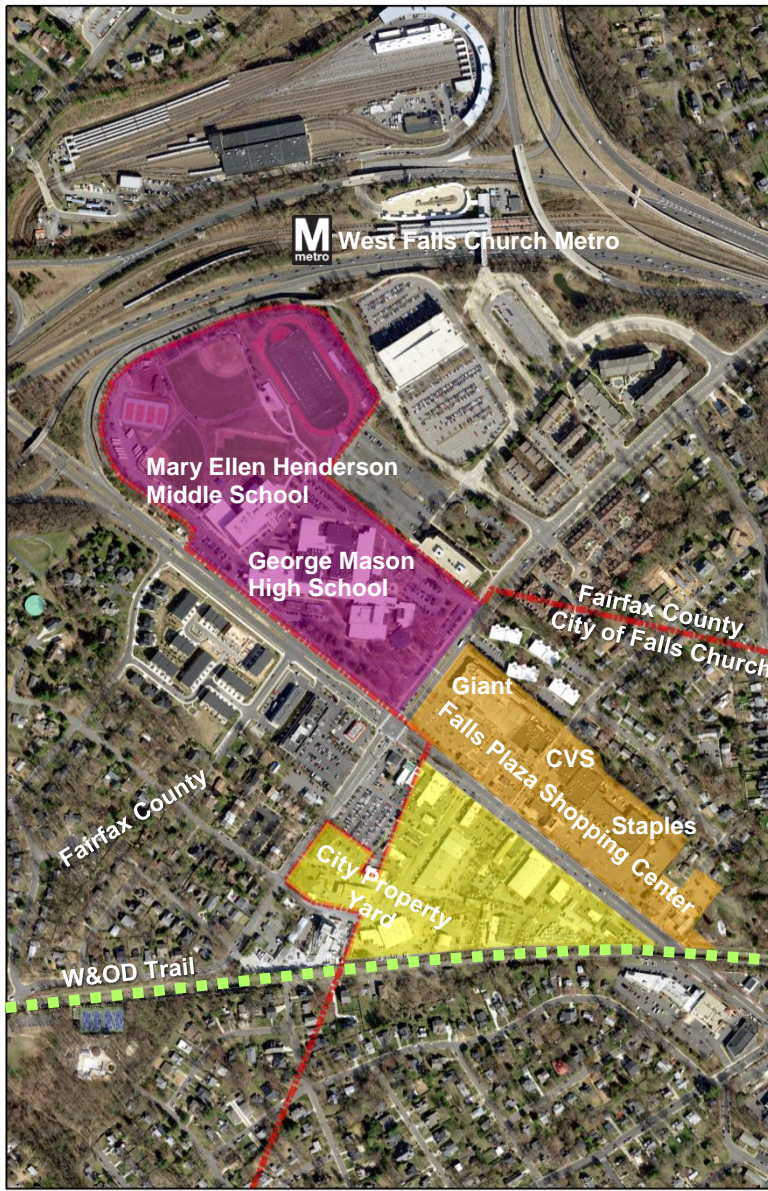




West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Intro & Background



Local Context and Geography

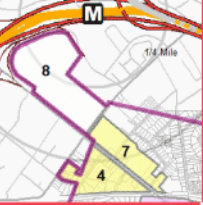
Chapter 4 of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan identified the area between the W&OD Trail and the western City boundary as two separate POAs, the Gordon Road Triangle (POA 4) and the West End (POA 7). In 2013, the City of Falls Church acquired land from adjacent Fairfax County through a legal agreement and referendum. A large portion of this land, referred to as “Schools-Related Parcels,” was designated as Planning Opportunity Area 8. This plan examines these three POAs together to develop a coordinated vision for redevelopment of the City’s West End.

The Schools-Related Parcels POA is located at the westernmost end of the City, north of the intersection of Leesburg Pike (SR 7) and Haycock Road. This land comprises over 34 acres and includes the George Mason High School and Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School campuses. It is bordered by Interstate 66 to the north, and is between the Leesburg Pike exit off Interstate 66 and the West Falls Church Metro Station.

The West End POA (POA 7) is located on the northeastern side of West Broad Street between the W&OD Trail and Haycock Road. The area currently includes the Falls Plaza Shopping Center which is bisected by Birch Street.

On the south side of West Broad Street at the intersection with the W&OD Trail is the Gordon Road Triangle POA (POA 4). This area currently contains a mix of automobile sales and service, retail sales, light industrial services, office, vehicle storage uses, and the City’s property yard.

Each Planning Opportunity Area (POA) in the City presents its own opportunities. The factors that make these POAs special include the following:



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8

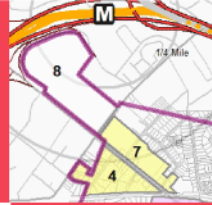


- The City's high school and middle school, George Mason High School and Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School;
- Proximity of the West Falls Church Metrorail Station;
- City ownership of approximately 34 acres of land, almost 10 of which will be used for economic development; and
- Large parcels of land that are under single ownership which create the opportunity for larger mixed-use development footprints to expand market presence within the Northern Virginia and Washington Metro Area.

Each POA fits a unique role and purpose within the larger City. The West End POAs collectively define an area characterized by strong multimodal regional connectivity and a growing interest for attractive, coordinated mixed use redevelopments projects on the sites adjacent to the planned economic development project.



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



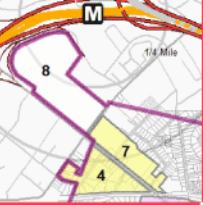
Regional Context

The West End is one of the key places in the constellation of Northern Virginia. West Broad Street is part of a major regional roadway (State Route 7) that extends from Leesburg to Alexandria and also connects the City to Tysons Corner, Seven Corners, and Bailey's Crossroads. The POA is located at the western edge of the City with direct access to the West Falls Church Metro Station and Interstate 66. It is approximately 2.5 miles from Tysons Corner along Leesburg Pike (SR 7), and 6 miles from Ballston via Interstate 66.

The West End is surrounded on three sides by Fairfax County. On the eastern side is the VA Tech/UVA joint campus and a private, entry-controlled surface parking lot. The West Falls Church Metro Station is just beyond, and includes a five story parking structure. Just south of the West Falls Church Metro Station is a condominium neighborhood. West of Leesburg Pike (SR 7) in Fairfax County are single family houses and a new townhouse neighborhood. The W&OD Trail, a 45-mile regional trail between Shirlington and Purcellville, borders the southern edge of the POA.



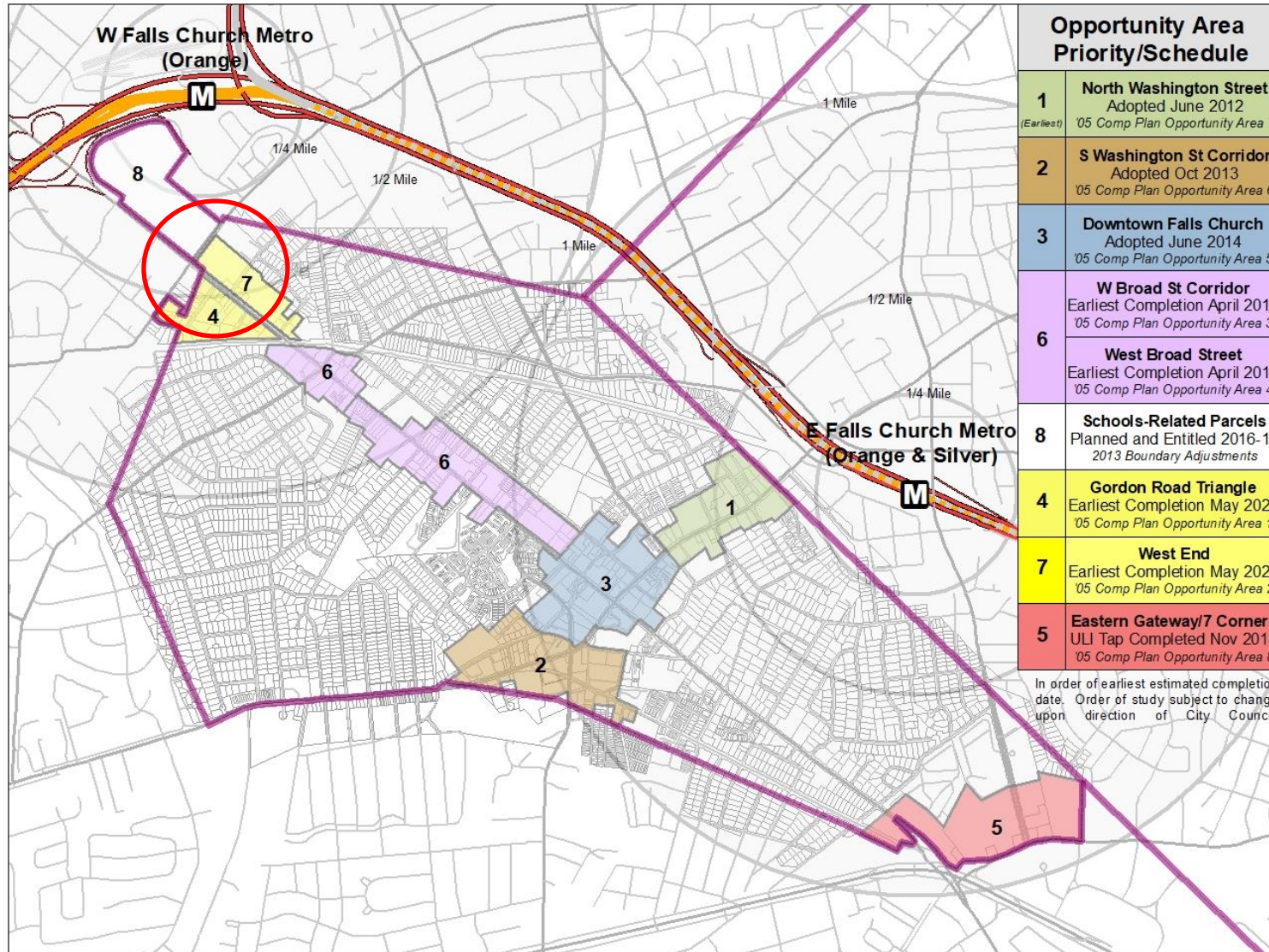
West Falls Church Metro



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8

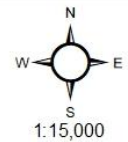


Intro & Background



October 2019

Planning
Opportunity Area
Priority/Schedule

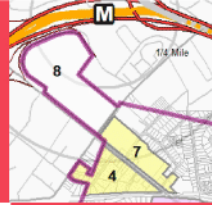


City of
Falls Church

Legend

- City Boundary
- Planning Study (Opportunity) Areas





Methodology

This plan is a product of the City of Falls Church, commissioned by the Falls Church City Council. The plan blends information from several sources including adopted City policies, local history, regional context and trends, best practices and input from the Falls Church community, landowners and business owners. Quantitative data was acquired from a number of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and the City of Falls Church Real Estate Assessor. GIS data for map creation and analysis was created by the City of Falls Church. Site pictures are from Google Images, Google Earth, Bing Maps, and on-location by City officials. Qualitative data was acquired from community meetings, developers, planners, the City of Falls Church City Council, and the City of Falls Church Planning Commission.

Stakeholder workshops were held on February 23, 2017, and June 19, 2019. The workshops consisted of key stakeholders for the study area including representatives from the following:

- Regional Agencies (Virginia Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, Northern Virginia Regional Commission);
- Fairfax County (Supervisors Offices, Department of Planning & Zoning, and Department of Transportation);
- City staff (Planning Division and Public Works); and
- Landowners/Adjacent business owners (Virginia Tech/University of Virginia, Washington Metro and



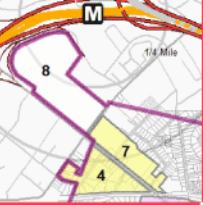
October 26, 2019 Community Meeting

Transit Authority, Federal Realty Investment Trust, George Mason High School redevelopment team, West Falls Church Gateway Partners, and Beyer),

A community kickoff meeting was held on March 25, 2017, in the Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School Cafetorium. This community meeting focused on redevelopment opportunities in the Schools-Related Parcels POA. There was an attendance of about 45 people, 20 of which were community members.

Another community meeting was held on October 26, 2019, at Falls Church Episcopal. At this meeting, local stakeholders, residents, and city staff came together to review what has already been planned and entitled for POA 8 and then discussed how that connects with future redevelopment in the West End and Gordon Road POAs.

Public input received at the community meeting was incorporated into the draft and presented at the December 2, 2019 Planning Commission work session.



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



History

Past

Gordon Road Triangle

The Gordon Triangle was once part of the 1,279-acre Pearson Grant of Grant of 1724, owned by Captain Simon Pearson. It was also part of the Wayside property that Catherine West inherited from her grandfather Colonel Broadwater in 1806. The Wayside property was later sold to Ellen and Leonard S. Gordon (for whom Gordon Road is named) in 1886.

In 1895, Mr. Gordon divided the property and sold the north side (area north of Leesburg Pike). Later in 1949, the Falls Church City School Board purchased this area.

Town of Falls Church

The Schools-Related Parcels Planning Opportunity Area (POA) encompasses land that was originally part of the Town of Falls Church. A single-room school house was located on the site and burned down in 1857. The land remained vacant and was retroceded to Fairfax County in 1890 as part of a segregationist measure.

The Town of Falls Church incorporated in 1948 to become the City of Falls Church. Falls Church City Public Schools separated from the Fairfax School system upon authorization from the Virginia Board of Education in 1949. The Schools-Related Parcels POA area and adjacent parcels were purchased by the City to build a school. George Mason High School was originally constructed in 1950 and has served both middle and high school students from the City of Falls Church. Additions to the school building were completed in 1953, 1955, 1962, 1968, and

1972. The additions have resulted in a sprawling campus that covers over 30 acres of the POA.

In 2005, Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School was constructed to relieve overcrowding in the George Mason High School building. The 136,000 sq. ft. middle school was built with a compact, vertical design at a height of 3 stories.

Washington & Old Dominion Railroad

The Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad operated in the City from 1859 to 1968. The West Falls Church railroad station was once located close to the intersection of West Broad Street and the W&OD Trail. This station was primarily used for freight while the East Falls Church station was used by passengers.

All W&OD services were ended in 1968. When W&OD operations ceased, the Virginia Electric and Power Company bought the right-of-way for its electric transmission lines. In 1974, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority began to purchase the right-of-way. The first section of the W&OD Trail opened in Falls Church later that year.

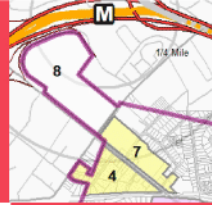


Washington & Old Dominion Railroad

Intro & Background



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



UVA/VT Land Agreement

The City of Falls Church owns approximately five acres of land in Fairfax County adjacent to POA 8, which was acquired in 1975. On February 14, 1994, this land was ground leased to UVA and Virginia Tech for at least 25 years and up to 40 years based on City Ordinance 1461. The institutions pay rent of \$1 annually to the City as well as any utility and maintenance costs on the property. The lease allows the institutions to build additional buildings on the land as long as they are used for institutional purposes. There is currently only one building on the land, the remainder of the property is occupied by parking.

The lease stipulates an option to purchase the five acres. At the beginning of the lease period the institutions paid the City \$500,000 for this option, which begins in the 26th year of the Ground Lease. The purchase price at that time would be \$3,350,000, and would increase yearly at a rate of 3.6% compounded through the end of the term.

Present

There has been almost a decade's worth of planning for the City's West End. The following subsections highlight some of the major studies and actions for the area.

2013 Boundary Adjustment

Planning Opportunity Area 8 is referred to as the "Schools-Related Parcels" in the 2013 boundary adjustment agreement between the City of Falls Church and Fairfax County titled, "Voluntary Boundary Adjustment Agreement By and Between the City of Falls Church, Virginia, and Fairfax County, Virginia" adopted by Falls Church City Council resolution TR13-13 on April 22, 2013, and approved by voter referendum on November 5, 2013. On December 13, 2013, a Special Court appointed by the

Site History and Past Studies

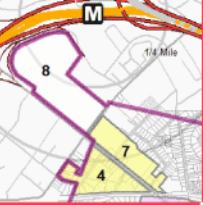
| | |
|-----------|---|
| Dec 2010 | Gordon Road Student Study |
| Dec 2013 | Boundry Adjustment |
| Oct 2014 | ULI Technical Assistance Panel Study (TAP) |
| Dec 2014 | Virgina Tech Study |
| Mar 2015 | ULI Mini-TAP |
| Aug 2016 | Comprehensive Plan Admendment [Revitalization Areas] |
| Mar 2017 | UDA Grant - Urban Design Guidelines |
| Jun 2017 | Nelson Nygaard Study |
| Jan 2018 | Comprehensive Plan Admendment [Revitalization District / Land Use Change] |
| Aug 2018 | Zoning Ordinance Amendment |
| Dec 2018 | Zoning Map Amendment |
| July 2019 | WFC Special Exception Entitlement Approval |

STUDIES ACTIONS

Virginia Supreme Court approved the voluntary boundary adjustment agreement and transfer of 38.4 acres from Fairfax County to the City of Falls Church. The Schools-Related Parcels area is the larger of two areas transferred to the City in the adjustment, it is 34.56 acres. The stipulations of the agreement for the Schools-Related Parcels allows up to 30% of the acreage to be used for any lawful purpose.

Recent Planning Studies

Gordon Road Student Study (2010) During the Fall 2010 semester, Virginia Tech's Urban Affairs & Planning graduate studio conducted an analysis of Falls Church's Gordon Road Triangle and created a concept plan for redeveloping the site. Creating a walkable, transit-oriented development with ample green space was among the major recommendations from the study.



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) (2104) - A TAP coordinated by ULI took place in October 2014. The TAP focused on redevelopment of the Schools-Related Parcels POA and included experts from fields related to urban design, development, and real estate. Members of the public and City officials attended and gave feedback regarding the property. The TAP recommended a mix of uses in “agora” type development focused on the corner of Haycock Road and Leesburg Pike (Rt 7) on the City property. The panel also recommended redevelopment of adjacent Metro property in Fairfax County that would provide an urban and transportation continuation between the POA and the West Falls Church Metro Station.

Virginia Tech Study (2014) - Another Virginia Tech graduate studio (Fall 2014) conducted an analysis of the ULI TAP to examine land use and development issues in the Schools-Related Parcels POA. Key recommendations from the study included increasing park and open space land, creating affordable housing, designing a wayfinding system to the West Falls Church Metro, and enhancing safety through pedestrian-oriented design.

ULI mini-TAP (2015) - ULI conducted a mini-TAP in 2015 which focused on redevelopment opportunities for the Gordon Road Triangle POA. Recommendations from the study included creating a gridded street network, establishing retail frontage along Broad Street, and incorporating streetscape, pedestrian, and park/open space improvements into redevelopment.

Urban Development Authority (UDA) Grant (2017) - The City received a UDA Planning grant through the Commonwealth’s Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment. Through that grant, the City worked with Rhodeside & Harwell to develop Urban Design Guidelines

for the Schools-Related Parcels POA. The study recommended a number of guidelines to create a mixed-use urban center and a “special place” for Falls Church including:

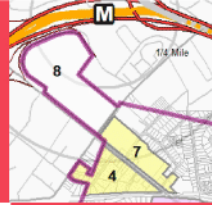
- incorporating architectural features to break up the massing of buildings;
- using ground floor treatments to foster an active and human-scale environment;
- creating special street corners;
- incorporating streetscape and public art;
- using built elements to create a welcoming gateway; and
- creating a development pattern that is sensitive to the surrounding land uses and includes appropriate transitional areas.



Public Works Yard Potential Design (ULI mini-TAP)



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Nelson-Nygaard Study (2017) - With funding from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) program, Nelson/Nygaard conducted a study of the transportation network in the West Falls Church area. The study included several important recommendations including:

- improving street connectivity through the site and to adjacent properties;
- establishing a high quality bicycle network; and
- providing safe and efficient pedestrian circulation within and around the site.

Referendum

In November 2017, Falls Church voters approved a referendum for the issuance of up to \$120 million in bonds for the construction of a new George Mason High School. As part of the strategy to mitigate taxpayer costs for this new high school, the City Council, School Board, Planning Commission, and Economic Development Authority jointly planned and marketed approximately 10 acres of land from the Schools-Related Parcels POA for private economic



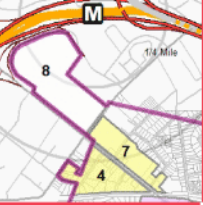
Rendering of the new George Mason High School

development. A long-term land lease for the site will be granted to the developer, and the value of that land lease and the future tax revenues from such redevelopment will be used to help defray the cost of annual debt service for the new school.

Comprehensive Plan & Zoning Amendments

A number of land use and zoning changes were approved to facilitate and support the development of the new high school and a significant mixed-use project. These changes are summarized below and discussed in more detail in the Land Use & Zoning chapter of this plan.

- January 22, 2018 – Amended Chapter 4 of the Comprehensive Plan to create a “Special Revitalization District for Education and Economic Development” and designate the schools related parcels POA as “Parks & Open Space” with two School Symbols and “Mixed-Use” within a “Special Revitalization District for Education and Economic Development” on the Future Land Use Plan map.
- August 13, 2018 – Amended B-2 zoning district to create new special exception provisions (Special Exception Entitlement and Special Exception Site Plan) to provide additional flexibility in height and density needed to achieve significant mixed-use development projects and allow for by-right development of an elementary or secondary school up to a height of seven stories.
- December 10, 2018 – Amended the Official Zoning District Map to change the existing zoning in the Schools-Related Parcels POA from R-1A , Low Density Residential to B-2, Central Business to accommodate the anticipated special exceptions



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



and site plans for the economic development project and to permit additional height for the new urban scale high school.

West Falls Church Special Exception Entitlement Approval

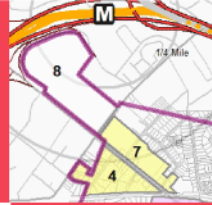
On July 8, 2019, City Council approved a Special Exception Entitlement (SEE) for the West Falls Church mixed-use development project. The SEE governs the general locations of the development's buildings, height of buildings, location, type, and amount of individual uses on the site, infrastructure and transportation on the site, public facilities and utilities, and other aspects related to future approvals and development on the subject property. More detailed plans showing the final project design will be developed as part of the Special Exception Site Plan process.



Massing Diagram for Approved West Falls Church SEE Application



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Existing Comprehensive Plan Guidance

The Comprehensive Plan establishes land use and urban design goals for the City's West End. These principles for each of the three POAs are consolidated below.

Land Use & Zoning:

- Modify the Future Land Use Map to reflect the areas where development will occur.
- Create a retail appearance on West Broad Street with retail uses on the first floor of buildings.
- Consolidate lots to achieve effective site planning and large-scale or mixed-use development.
- Rezone from the default R-1A zoning district to a district compatible with desired redevelopment, or create a new zoning district that is compatible with desired redevelopment.
- Replacement or renovation of George Mason High School.

Urban Design:

- Design guidelines that are appropriate for an area that includes schools as well as a mixture of commercial uses. These would not supersede the existing Design Guidelines but complement them in regard to the special area and circumstances of the POA including the two schools and the West Falls Church Metro Station.
- Locate buildings as close to West Broad Street as possible with parking in the rear of buildings.

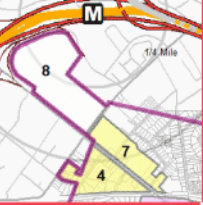
- Effectively use screening and buffering techniques for adjacent uses in the City and the neighboring areas of Fairfax County, as well as compatible transitions to the adjacent neighborhoods in terms of height, scale, and intensity.
- Achieve specific and consistent architectural goals (building materials, window types, roof overhangs, roof pitch, and porches).
- Promote a positive image of the City as part of a gateway.
- Effectively landscape the interior of parking areas and provide screening from the street.
- Use uniform signage.

Sustainability:

- Economic Sustainability in regard to new commercial development.
- Environmental Sustainability involving Net Zero, District Energy, geothermal systems, and LEED Gold certification.
- Include green space along the southern border of the triangle with the Grove Branch to provide a better buffer for the stream and as an attraction and entrance area for cyclists along the W&OD Trail.

Transportation:

- Create connections to the rest of the City of Falls Church via West Broad Street (SR 7) and the West End and Gordon Road Triangle POAs.

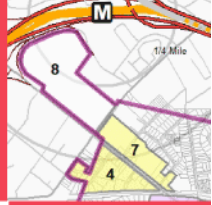


West End

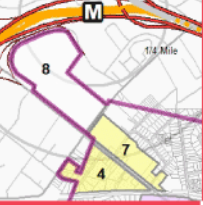
Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



- Create regional connections via the West Falls Church Metro Station, Leesburg Pike (SR 7), and Interstate 66.
- Consider the reconfiguration of Gordon Road and the alignment with Birch Street.
- Provide convenient and safe pedestrian access and bicycle access from West Broad Street to businesses and from businesses to West Falls Church Metro station and the W&OD Trail.
- Consolidate entrances.



2. Concepts



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8

Vision & Goals

Vision

With the Comprehensive Plan as guidance, this plan uses the following vision statement for developing recommendations and future scenarios for this area:

The West End is a vibrant gateway into the City of Falls Church. Residents and visitors are immersed in a welcoming, connected community that embraces the City's heritage. Building upon activity already underway, investment supports the area's economic vitality, enhances safety and walkability, and affirms the City's commitment as an urban sustainability leader.

Goals

To achieve that vision, this plan establishes the following goals for investment in the area:

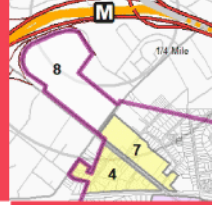
- Provide a guide for the coordinated redevelopment of the City's West End that establishes a "new downtown". Promote redevelopment that fosters economic vitality, sustainability, and improves community quality of life.
- Encourage quality urban design that creates an attractive gateway into the City and builds upon a sense of place through consistent streetscape and materials, walkable neighborhoods, and community spaces.
- Enhance transportation connections and accessibility. Incorporate safe, frequent pedestrian crossings and improve multi-modal connections to the metro and other areas of the City.

- Ensure utility and infrastructure planning meets the current and future demands of the City's residents and businesses while incorporating innovative, sustainable solutions.
- Incorporate publicly accessible parks and open space areas into redevelopment.

The following subsections provide discussion of key concepts that support the Plan's vision and goals.



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



The “West End”

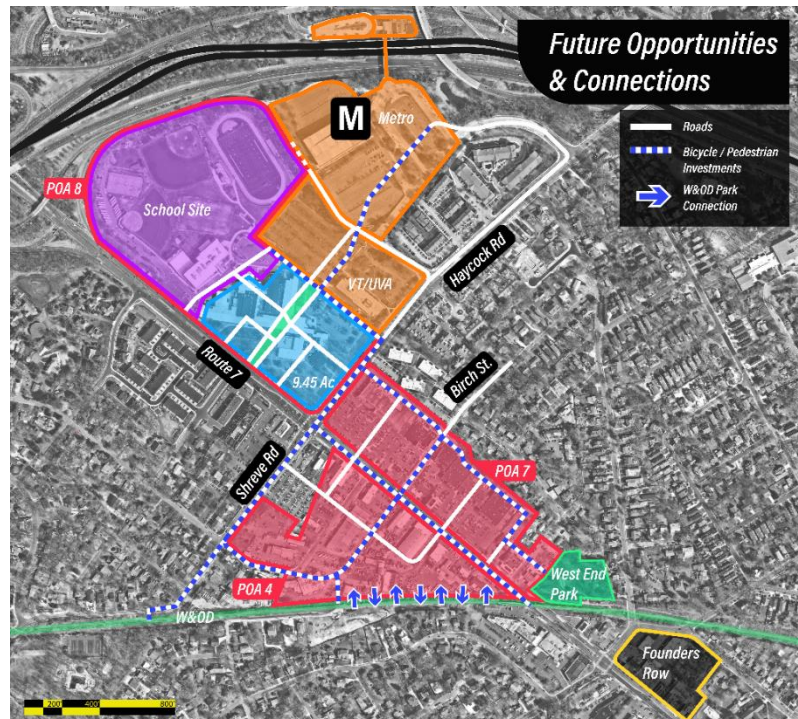
Together the School Parcel, the Gordon Triangle, and the West End POAs create an exciting section of the City, known as the “West End.” This area is poised for growth. The construction of the new George Mason High School, the West Falls Church Economic Development Project (9.45 acre site) and nearby Founders Row development are spurring revitalization in surrounding areas. Planned redevelopment of Virginia Tech’s campus and the West Falls Church Metro highlight the economic potential of this area and create the opportunity for a larger mixed-use development.

As investment in the POAs continues, it is important to consider how the West End can become a new destination that not only draws in regional interest but becomes a place that people want to repeatedly visit.

Creating a Vibrant Destination

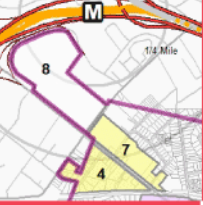
A vibrant destination should offer diverse amenities to build experiential depth. Creating a place where everything cannot be taken in at first glance intrigues patrons to return and explore. Modern activity centers are expected to include a number of services and amenities such as restaurants, bars, breweries, retail, public spaces, and programmed community events. When paired with metro connectivity and office space the vibrant activity center becomes an attractive package for employment in a live/work/play environment.

While the City should strive to create a vibrant activity center by incorporating these amenities, it is equally important to consider what makes Falls Church unique. Building upon the City’s heritage and considering local and regional needs can help to create a successful destination.



Connectivity Concept Map

Concepts



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Concepts

Celebrate the Old, Imagine the New

The W&OD trail, used by walkers, joggers, cyclists, and commuters, was once a historic railway and is a great example of an existing feature that could be celebrated. The City's history could be integrated into a modern design which builds upon the existing trail. One possibility is to create a park parallel to the trail which tells the history of the railway while offering inviting restaurants and amenities for those entering or exiting the trail.

Future redevelopment provides numerous opportunities to incorporate a mixture of new uses. For example, a food hall could be a major draw providing a variety of food, drinks, and opportunities for community interaction. Something similar to the successful Eastern or Union Markets in DC and tailored to the City's scale and aesthetics could be viable. This may also provide an opportunity to showcase some of the City's famous Vietnamese cuisine from the Eden Center.



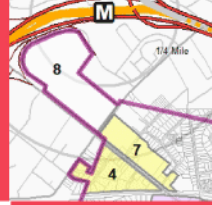
The Indianapolis Cultural Trail: how bike trails and cities can positively interact



Union Market – Washington D.C.



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Quality Urban Design that Builds Upon a Sense of Place

The City of Falls Church is a unique place in the heart of Northern Virginia. The City has always prided itself on urban design – both in the design of its streets, such as lined Broad Street, and the cohesive design of its accenting features such as its red brick sidewalks, peaked roofed bus stops, green bicycle racks, and colonial lampposts.

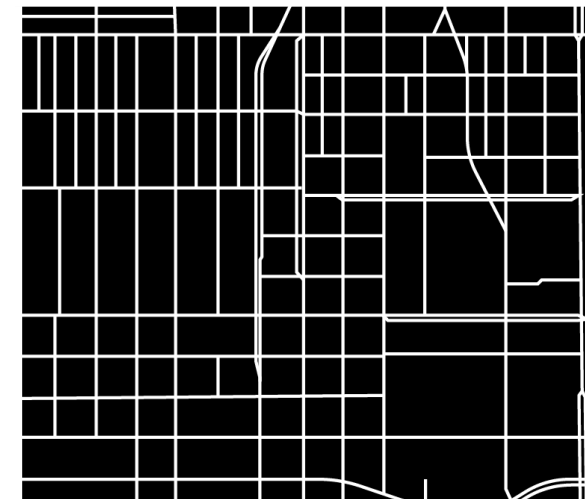
Walkable Neighborhood

A pedestrian scaled urban framework is an important first step to enhancing urban design. Street grid connectivity and accessibility between the three POA parcels is currently a challenge with Route 7 and Haycock functioning more as an obstacle than a link. Block lengths range from 600 feet to over 1,000 feet (by comparison Downtown Falls Church is 300-400 feet). Building setbacks are placed far from the sidewalk creating large seas of parking lots further creating an obstacle for pedestrians.

The area would benefit from a new street grid which focuses on smaller, walkable blocks. This could be created through additional interior streets, enhanced connectivity across major roads to adjacent sites, and reduced building setbacks. Prioritization of paths leading to regional transit connections such as the W&OD Trail, West Falls Church Metro, and Metrobus stops is also critical to creating a multi-modal community.



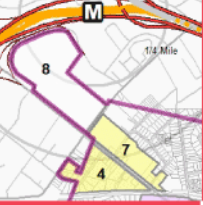
Savannah, Georgia has a typical block length of 550' by 650' broken up by secondary mid-block lanes and green public squares.



Phoenix, Arizona has a typical block size ranging from 750' to 2,300'.

1-Square Mile Comparison of City Blocks

Concepts



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8

Places Where Community Happens

A pedestrian-oriented urban framework is not a guarantee to a successful space, but it can help a place to flourish through the creation of smaller, interconnected experiences.

Wide, tree-lined sidewalks; pedestrian-scaled lighting; places for stopping and sitting; public art; and opportunities for sidewalk dining are all simple streetscape features which help to elevate a place in the minds of local residents and visitors. Placement of flexible spaces for gathering, such as plazas and urban parks, should be considered early on in the redevelopment process.

Consistent Materials and Streetscape

In 2017, the City adopted updated streetscape standards for commercial streets. The standards include details for street furniture, cross sections, crosswalk materials, and frequency of crosswalks. As a whole, the standards call for wide, tree-lined sidewalks with opportunities for sidewalk dining mixed with pedestrian amenities.

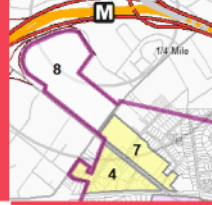
All of the features and characteristics listed above accumulate into a singular discernible image attached to the place. Together these elements establish a theme and familiar pattern adding to a community's identity and sense of place. Serving as the western gateway into the City, these three POAs have the opportunity to convey a unified welcoming message and sense of arrival into Falls Church.



Example of experiential design features



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Multimodal Connectivity and Accessibility

The West End has the opportunity to serve as an important transportation hub where many transportation modes come together, including rail, bus, auto, bike, and pedestrian. Transportation investments should strengthen regional transportation links and increase safety and accessibility for all travelers.

Safe Connections and Amenities

The City's West End should build upon existing connections to Washington, D.C., and the Northern Virginia region and strive to be an adaptable, welcoming transportation hub for those who live within or visit Falls Church. The ease at which people are able to safely circulate throughout the area and transfer from one mode of travel to another is essential for encouraging longer visits and returns. Frequent pedestrian crossings are needed to make the area more pedestrian-friendly.

Other amenities can also help to enhance circulation and accessibility throughout the area. Quality streetscape including tree-lined sidewalks and benches enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage people to walk. Shared parking garages promote the opportunity for visitors to park once and visit multiple destinations or spend a few hours exploring the area.

Bikeshare

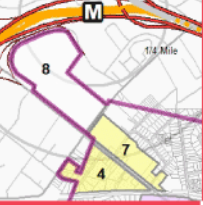
The City's 2019 launch of the regional Capital Bikeshare system has enhanced connections with adjoining jurisdictions and strengthened the utility of the W&OD Trail. There is currently one bikeshare location in the study area located near the intersection of Haycock Road & Leesburg Pike. Another bikeshare station is located just outside the City at the West Falls Church metro station. Additional



Cady's Alley in Georgetown, Washington D.C.



Rendered Vision for Bus Rapid Transit Lanes in Detroit, MI



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



bikeshare stations throughout the West End would make it more convenient to use.

Bus Rapid Transit

The positioning of the study area along Route 7 makes it a good candidate for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. A BRT would provide more efficient circulation throughout the West End and the City as a whole. Through the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the City along with Fairfax County, Arlington County, and the City of Alexandria has participated in the Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III studies for a Route 7 BRT. A future Phase IV study will provide additional engineering details and guidance for construction.

Greenways

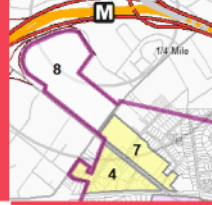
Greenways are vegetated linear corridors that enhance connectivity and provide pathways for walking and bicycling. Redevelopment within the Gordon Road Triangle could enhance connections to the W&OD Trail, creating a more permeable edge to the City that invites people into the site.



Potential Concept to Connect Development with W&OD Trail



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Community Building Blocks

Utilities and the natural environment are building blocks of any community. Having the right infrastructure to build upon is critical to achieving the vision and goals of this plan.

Stormwater

The City's West End is largely covered by impervious surfaces, such as surface parking lots, building rooftops, roadways, and sidewalks. Redevelopment of this area provides the opportunity to improve stormwater management. For example, expanding tree canopy and incorporating parks and open space areas will help to absorb stormwater runoff. Where possible, redevelopment should emphasize green infrastructure (rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavement, etc.) over grey infrastructure (underground vaults, curbs, gutters, pipes, etc.).



Use of green infrastructure to manage stormwater

Sanitary Sewer

Improvements to the City's sanitary sewer will need to be made in order to accommodate future development in the City's West End. The City should continue to evaluate needed improvements to the sewer system and work with developers to ensure adequate sanitary sewer capacity is available.

Utility Undergrounding

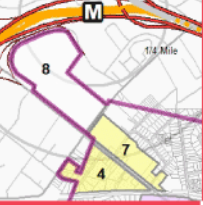
Overhead utility lines should be undergrounded where possible. Some of the existing power, telephone, and cable lines within the study area are located on wooden utility poles which are not aesthetically pleasing, block visibility, and create conflicts with street tree growth.

City Property Yard

The City Property Yard provides the storage and workspaces needed to support many City services. The Property Yard covers approximately 5.5 acres and is in need of redevelopment. A public-private partnership could support the needed investment and make better use of the land area. Redesign of the property yard could include ground-level space to support City operations with upper floors available for office or community uses.

District Energy

District energy systems allow for the efficient use of heat from local Combined Heat and Power (CHP) generation, greatly reducing fuel waste associated with conventional power generation. District energy systems share hot and cold water created as a by-product of locally-made electricity. The City should evaluate strategies and identify actions that would facilitate the creation and installation of district energy systems in the West End.



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8

Dominion Smart Cities

Dominion Virginia Power is investing in smart meter technology in the Commonwealth. Deployment of smart meters will help Dominion to provide better service through power outage detection and remote meter readings. The smart meters would also have other monitoring capabilities including flood detection, air quality, smart parking, and traffic counts. The City should continue to work with Dominion Virginia Power as this initiative is rolled out.

Urban forest

Trees are a defining feature of the City; particularly as one enters Falls Church along West Broad Street. In addition to distinguishing the City from surrounding areas, trees also provide a host of benefits including shade, comfort, and enhanced air and water quality. Redevelopment should consider opportunities to expand existing tree canopy.

Urban farms

Urban farming is an important source of local food production that helps to build a healthy community. Urban agriculture can take a variety of forms including rooftop gardens, vertical gardens, and community gardens. Redevelopment should consider innovative strategies to incorporate community gardens and urban farms.



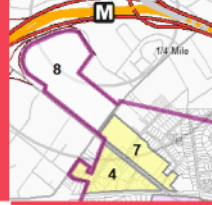
Rooftop urban farm



Tree-lined West Broad Street



West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Pentagon Row - Arlington, VA



Pentagon Row (winter use) - Arlington, VA

Public Gathering Spaces That Create Opportunities for Community Activities

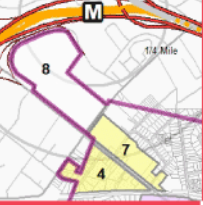
The City's West End is almost completely covered with impervious surfaces and lacks gathering spaces. Public gathering spaces provide places to meet, celebrate, and enjoy the outdoors. In urban environments, these places often take the form of plazas, parks, promenades, and pedestrian-oriented streets.

Redevelopment of this area provides the opportunity to incorporate spaces for recreation and relaxation. To be successful, adequate land needs to be set aside early on in the redevelopment process. Lot consolidation and coordinated redevelopment can provide the needed space to create gathering areas with room for amenities.

City parks and gathering spaces need to include several key components, including: a mix of sun and shade, places to sit, and flexible space for programmed events and uses throughout the year. Most importantly, they need to be convenient for people to access and should be located in proximity to restaurants and food service.

Plazas

Plazas are gathering spaces which typically are furnished with benches, tables, and landscaping. Plazas typically incorporate public art, fountains, or other unique features that instill a sense of place and attract visitors. Such places create opportunities for socializing and relaxation. Flexible amenities such as moveable chairs and tables can provide people with the ability to adapt the space to their needs.



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Central Green Spaces & Promenades

Redevelopment should incorporate central linear green spaces to host large events and create opportunities for active recreational activities. Linear pathways or promenades should also be incorporated to accommodate pedestrian through-traffic. Design of these spaces should be flexible and support a variety of activities.

Pocket Parks

Redevelopment in the City's West End presents the opportunity to incorporate pocket parks which are small open spaces located between buildings or along streets. Such areas create spaces to rest, provide meeting places, and integrate green spaces into the urban landscape.

Streets as Public Spaces

Streets can serve as destinations in themselves rather than simply a means to get from one point to another. To be a successful public space, streets should have lower speed limits and wide sidewalks which make pedestrians feel safe and create an inviting place to visit, relax, and socialize.

Rooftop Terraces

The City's West End also provides the opportunity to rethink how to maximize usable land area. Creating usable rooftop terraces is one way to overcome a site's spatial constraints. Rooftop terraces provide an excellent way to create gathering spaces and bring life outside. Rooftop terraces can supplement other types of gathering spaces, and design preference should be given to spaces that are publicly accessible.



King Street – Old Town, Alexandria: Example of a street serving as a successful public space.